

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, November 12, 1970

Editorial

(The Clipper has invited Duxbury ministers to take over the editorial column for the next several weeks. The Rev. Lewis Mills of St. John's Church wrote this first editorial. -- Ed.)

OUR TOWN IS GROWING

Wherever two or three gather together in Duxbury these days the conversation most always include some sort of semi-alarmist statement to the effect that "our town is growing." Now that is not news to most of us nor does it come as any surprise. After all who is it that hasn't noticed the frenzied gouging of the bulldozer in the virgin woods or stood in the longer and longer lines at the local supermarket? Is there anyone left who has missed the jammed parking lot at the business end of the long bridge or been able to duck the quiet announcement of double sessions for the offspring? Only a hermit type living in grand isolation would have missed the ever-present signs of a small New England town in rapid transition.

It's clear, perhaps, that most of us see good planning by the town fathers as the primary antidote in what seems to be an uphill battle to save not only Duxbury beach, as the bumper stickers urge, but the very town itself. But maybe it takes something more than planning; and that kind of thinking, if carefully scrutinized, is what the young call a "cop out." After all, what better way to avoid personal responsibility and involvement than to chuck the whole business to a committee, a board, or "Town hall?" Good planning by town officials is critical but so too is good thinking and the recognition of personal responsibility on the part of individuals. Those who drive cars, make leaves, dump rubbish, buy bread, and otherwise live, move and have their being in this magnificent piece of the planet are in the final analysis the ones who will build or destroy what we have.

If you can accept the idea of personal responsibility that while the future of our town may lie with official programs it is even more so a matter of individual attitudes, then the next logical question would seem to be "What can I do?"

Certainly the answers to that question could fill an enormous book, and what is offered here is only prime for the pump.

First you can work hard to resist the "lets keep things as they are" attitude. That's like keeping all your canvas up when the warning changes from light breezes to full gale. Keeping things as they are may be a pleasant mental pastime, but that kind of attitude carries the seeds of its own destruction. Towns, churches, institutions of government, and communities of men, big or small, simply cannot keep things mesmerized and at a standstill. More often than not you can hear this kind of thinking pleading for a hearing. Resisting that facile but tricky trap is one place to begin.

Second, it might help too if we can avoid thinking of Duxbury as the destination of the great escape. Walls and barricades, even though they be figments of the suburban imagination, do not exist. Urban blight, decaying transportation, polluted air and rivers are all problems which transcend city and county lines. They belong to us and we bring them home whether we want to or not. We can't escape. We can change the scenery and try to forget but that is too bad medicine for a citizen of a growing town.

Third, what about substituting something we might call "creative sharing?" Share we must, it's the law, but creative sharing is another thing. How can we share what we have with most people in the most satisfactory way for most of the time? Can we think creatively so that we can ask not how can we keep people out but how we can work them in, so that the community is enriched, enlightened and exciting? It is obvious that the difference between the first, second and third suggestions doesn't belong to an official committee but to the mind and spirit of Mr. and Mrs. Citizen.

Just this; it might help if we were to remember that we are most masters of our planet but rather its guests. Narrow that down a bit and you come up with an attitude which says the beauty of this place isn't ours simply because we live here. It's on loan to us; and, like all loans, the Giver will have an accounting. In short that means that the woodlands, the sand and water, the clean crisp air, and the soft refreshing rain belong to Somebody else, and that Somebody has seen fit to let us camp out here and share with Him in something rich and satisfying.

Our town is growing, and perhaps the critical question is will we grow with it? Will we be able to resist the old human tendency to stake it out for ourselves? Will we be able to share with all who want to be neighbors in a creative way that goes far beyond keeping the trees where they are and the grass green for another year. And will we be able to acknowledge that none of this is ours by right and privilege but is ours only so long as we use it well and make it better? These are critical questions. Surely all of us know that time and tide wait for no man.

Not even for us.